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contents

FEBRUARY 24-MARCH 9, 2011 | ISSUE 411 | SPRING HOME & PATIO



16

Photo by Vujovich Design Build, Inc.



34

Photo by Michal Daniel



46

Photo by Hubert Bonnet

DIALOGUE

- 8 A Word in Edgewise
- 9 Letters
- 10 Queer As Folks

COVER FEATURE

- 12 Minneapolis Home & Garden Show Features Celebrity Expert Andrew Downward

HOME & YARD BOULEVARD

- 16 Vujovich Design Build: Two Gay Couples Rave About Remodeling

NEWS

- 22 Lavender Lens: Creating Change Conference
- 23 Lavender Lens: Freedom To Marry Day Rally
- 30 Bear to Make a Difference on the Road

- 32 Big Gay News
- 33 Behaving Bradley

ARTS

- 34 On the Townsend
- 38 The Page Boy

BAR

- 40 Out on the Town Advertiser Guide
- 40 Bartender Spotlight
- 42 Showcase
- 43 Tickles Has New Sibling: Score Is Gay Sports Bar
- 45 Calendar

CUISINE

- 50 Off the Eaten Path

LEISURE

- 51 Lavender Lens: Black Frost Run

- 52 Northland Notes: Fur Flee Fouever

- 52 Lavender Lens: Babylon II
- 53 Through These Eyes
- 54 Lavender Lens: Womyn Unlimited Minnesota Gala

BACKTALK

- 55 The Network
- 56 LavenderMagazine.com Calendar
- 59 Classifieds
- 60 Community Connection
- 61 Dateland
- 61 Cartoon: Trolin
- 63 Consider the Source
- 64 Ms. Behavior
- 66 Yellow Pages Advertiser Index

ON THE COVER

Andrew Downward. Photo Courtesy of Andrew Downward

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The Gipper would have been 100 on February 6. While one never will forget his refusal to acknowledge the existence of AIDS (or his handling of other political decisions), facets of his personality bear examining in these bitter and divisive times.

President Ronald Reagan was an actor. He knew how to play to the crowd—and straight out play the crowd. He also was able to be less partisan and more willing to accept less than 100 percent, while ceding the limelight to others on occasion, as was noted in the February 7 issue of *Time* Magazine.

For Reagan's 100th, *Time* pulled out all the stops: among others, a feature by Richard Norton Smith, director of five presidential libraries, including Reagan's; and a reminiscence by Reagan's oftentimes-estranged daughter, Patti Davis.

Admittedly, in none of the pieces was the AIDS elephant, Reagan's fatal silence on the epidemic, placed in the room, but here, I'm interested in the positive things one can glean—my way of looking for the pony instead of the elephant.

Not for nothing was Reagan known as the "Great Communicator." His humor showed a keener understanding of the way things are

than he often was given credit for, as when he remarked, "Our right hand doesn't know what our far right hand is doing."

Wounded by John Hinckley's bullet during an assassination attempt in 1981, Reagan arrived at the hospital to find a multitude of doctors gathered by chance that day for a meeting. Though gravely injured, he eyed them, and cracked, "I hope they're all Republicans." His grace (and wit) under fire resonated with the American people.

Reagan is described as being modest, and, while pursuing his own goals, not insistent on having all the glory. Smith cites the plaque on Reagan's presidential desk that read: "There is no limit to what a man can do, or where he can go, if he doesn't mind who gets the credit." Reagan joked he'd been upstaged for years in Hollywood by scene-grabbers.

Bravery, optimism, and humor—along with a penchant for storytelling that individualizes and connects, instead of didacticism and vituperation that divide—drew the loyalty of Americans who see *It's a Wonderful Life* as exemplifying what the little person can do when the chips are down.

Optimism and a sunny nature don't ensure the best political, business, or social decisions, but they beat polarization, partisanship, and downright meanness.

Speak kindly, and carry a well-crafted script. **E.B. BOATNER**

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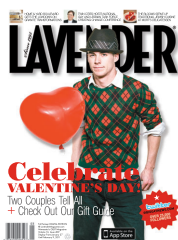
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LETTERS



Kudos to Lavender

I haven't written to *Lavender* previously. However, I have been reading *Lavender* for many years. Kudos to all of the *Lavender* staff and contributors over the years for an excellent LGBT magazine. I have enjoyed reading each edition from cover to cover.

I'm writing today to express my appreciation for the article on couples [by E.B. Boatner, "Getting to the Heart of the Matter," *Lavender*, Jan. 27]. I enjoyed the article very much, and encourage you to do more articles like this one. I like to hear the stories of local people.

Thank you!

ROY SWANDER

Thanks for Valentine's Day Article

I wanted to take a moment to say a huge thanks for the fine article [by E.B. Boatner, "Getting to the Heart of the Matter," *Lavender*, Jan. 27]. In a world where we constantly hear about "PNP" and "hookups," it is very nice to read this type of story.

I hope that we might see more stories like this. It is refreshing and wonderful to see people who are committed and love each other even when times are rough.

Thank you so much!

TIM MARBURGER

Fierce Love Article Bridges Communities

Thanks times a million. The article ["Tongues Untied Reprises *Fierce Love* for Black History Month," *Lavender*, Feb. 10] looks amazing. This is how we do outreach, and this article will do more than promote the play. It has the power to truly bridge our communities, and allow isolated black LGBT folks to know that there is a community out there for them.

I cannot thank you enough!

JASON JACKSON

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Winter Walk Day of Events

ON MARCH 5, Rainbow Health Initiative and Pounds-4Pride are hosting a Winter Walk Day of Events at Loring Park Community Arts Center, 1382 Willow Street, Minneapolis. They include a fitness class (3:30-4:30 PM); a meet and greet social (4:30-6 PM); and a 5k luminary winter walk around Loring Park (6-7 PM). For more information, visit <www.rainbowhealth.org>.

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OUTFRONT





MINNEAPOLIS HOME & GARDEN SHOW FEATURES *DIVINE DESIGN* CELEBRITY EXPERT

Interview with Andrew Downward

The Minneapolis Home & Garden Show reprises March 2-6. It offers local home and garden enthusiasts opportunities to meet with their favorite HGTV personalities, as well as to immerse themselves in the latest trends in landscaping, home design, and decorating displayed by some 700 exhibitors. On March 3, relax in the Lavender Lounge, a First Thursdays event.

This year's Celebrity Expert lineup includes a number who specialize in a variety of everything from design to paint color selection. Taniya Nayak (*Designed to Sell*), Christopher Straub (*Project Runway*), and international designer Jean-Michel Gauthreau will make special appearances, providing tips, tricks, and advice on various topics.

An outstanding feature is the Idea Home, an extreme green, energy-efficient house that puts a new interpretation on a classic style. The 1,600-square-foot domicile takes a

holistic approach to the green movement by using materials and initiatives in all aspects of the building, such as structural insulated panels (SIPs), which help houses retain and

maintain the desired temperature. The home was built by EPS Buildings, designed by Domain, furnished by Design within Reach, and landscaped by Mom's.

But even the greenest home needs added input from the color spectrum. Celebrity Expert Andrew Downward, painter and color coordinator on HGTV's *Divine Design*, is one of North America's most recognized paint specialists. He, too, will be meeting with the public to share painting tips and suggestions for attendees at all levels of painting expertise during his presentations March 3-4.

Recently, *Lavender* interviewed Downward about the infinite applications of paint in our lives, and he answered some colorful questions for our readers.

Just as everyone who has an iPhone these days is a photographer, so everyone figures that painting is just a matter

Celebrity Expert Andrew Downward, painter and color coordinator on HGTV's *Divine Design*, is one of North America's most recognized paint specialists.

of picking up a brush and a can of latex. What would you say about the need for some instruction in this area?

Well, they are right in one sense: They will need a brush and paint! The tricky part is what needs to happen before the paint goes on the wall. For instance, what steps are required to prepare the surface for paint? What color and sheen is right for your room? How can you add drama and effect to complement the color you have chosen? Finally, what products and tools will be needed to complete the job successfully? Now, *that* takes some instruction. If you know the answer to all these questions, go for it. If not, I'll see you at the show!

What will you be showing Twin Citians at the upcoming Home & Garden Show? Will you have demonstrations, films, hands-on?

In an action-packed hour, this Torontonian will be demonstrating to Twin Citians the steps needed to apply a perfect paint job, how to choose a color that is right for you, and how to add drama to any space. Is it just me, or did that sound like a *Star Trek* episode?

From what I've read, you took to pigments at an early age. Can you tell us a bit about your love of color?

My grandfather was an artist. As a young lad, I used to visit him, and he would let my brother, sisters, and me make our own paintings. He taught us how to mix color, and how to apply paint to get different effects. From this, a love for color was born, but more than this, a love of painting.

Is the physicality of painting part of the pleasure?

No. There is only one thing I can think of where the "physicality" is part of the pleasure, and it is definitely not painting!

When you contemplate a space, how do you feel it? What goes into choosing

colors or textures?

I actually spend less time feeling out the space, and more time feeling out—not up—the client. In my shows, I tell the audience that when choosing a color for their walls, first take a look in your closet. Your closet is a great reference when choosing color, because it can show you quickly what types of colors you are drawn to.

What's the most fun/interesting part of being a TV personality—of having the chance to influence so many others with your own aesthetic sensibilities?

The most interesting part of being a TV personality is getting out and meeting the people who really enjoyed the show. Working on a show like *Divine Design* is a grind. I was in on a Thursday night and out on the Sunday, just to start over again the following Thursday. There was little time for reflection, so coming out and presenting at home shows across the United States reminds me that the work we did on the show was appreciated and enjoyed. It's a great feeling. As far as being an influence, my only interest really is to empower people to do the work themselves. At the end of my shows, I hope that the audience has a greater understanding of the painting process, and a sense that they can paint, choose their own colors, and add drama to their space just by following a few simple steps.

How would you describe your own home: style, color. What aspects of your "tips to others" have you incorporated in your own surroundings?

I have six children, so I would describe my own home as chaos! In terms of my color palette, however, it is based in the deep neutrals, leaning towards the browns. A great tip when using neutrals in your home is to add splashes of red wherever you can. Another tip is to add drama to a neutral room by creating a focus/accent wall using a complementary color such as gold. I applied a gold striae on a deep brown wall with excellent result. The only problem was, it wasn't long

before my 4-year-old decided to experiment with markers. Hey, it's only paint—at least that's what I keep telling my therapist.

Color is not an isolated "thing"—it affects mood and other biological functions. If a client shows you their space, and says, for example, that they "like blues" or whatever shade, what would you show them in their surroundings (angle of light, outdoor landscaping, and so forth) that might change (or strengthen) their desire for that color?

Agreed, color affects the mood of a space a great deal. If a client shows me a space, and tells me they like blues, what I usually find is they have anchored their room to complement this pallet. For instance, they have chosen furniture, draperies, and accents that complement this color. If they haven't, it's time to be gentle but firm, and make color suggestions that will complement the room.

What else would you like to tell *Lavender* readers about your show, your work, colors, and paints before they come see you at the show?

I would like to tell *Lavender* readers that one of the best parts of my show, and the one I enjoy the most, is the question-and-answer period. I try to get to everyone's questions during this time, but will often continue speaking to audience members well past my presentation time. Also, I am really looking forward to visiting the Twin Cities. I have heard nothing but great things about the show, the people, and the city. Hope to see you all there! ■

Minneapolis Home & Garden Show

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RAVE ABOUT
REMODELING



Lander-Broton kitchen after.

Y

You've planned, thought, dreamed about remodeling. It's time to pick the team to build those dreams. How? Why? *Who?*

Tim Lander and Jay Broton chose Vujovich Design Build to renovate their historic South Minneapolis home in 2008,

Speaking for the couple, Lander says, "Their reputation for quality, and realistic appraisals of time and cost, were what initially sold me on Vujovich. Plus, their name is cool."



Lander-Broton kitchen before.



Renovated Kitchen: (from left) Chris McGuire, Vujovich Project Manager; Beth Malmberg, Vujovich Sales and Design Director; Tim Lander and Jay Borton.



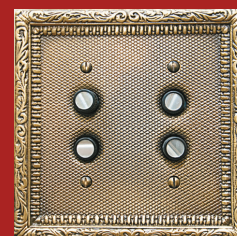
Lander-Broton home details: (Above) Eastlake Lily floral design; (Below) Mother-of-pearl light button switch is actually a modern dimmer.

Don Untiedt and Jim McKee had made the same choice in 2007 for their first home. Speaking for the couple, Untiedt notes, “We wanted to do business with gay-supportive businesses, and we had seen ads for Vujovich in *Lavender* from time to time.”

Ed Roskowinski, Owner and General Manager of Vujovich, observes, “Oftentimes, our clients come to us with things about their home

that are not working. Maybe they’ve collected photos or magazine clippings of some spaces that speak to them. Our job is to help them dig deeper—to explore how their home functions, and how it could function much better.

“Where do you park, and enter the home each day? How many steps is it from the car to the kitchen counter while carrying groceries? Are you right- or left-handed? ➡





Don Untiedt (left) and Jim McKee in their conservatory.



Untiedt-McKee master bath.

Do both of you get ready for work at the same time or at different times?"

Lander recalls, "We knew we wanted a two-car garage, and we knew that after building said garage, it would be challenging to do future renovations—especially an addition. Long story short, we concluded it would make more sense to renovate our entire home at the same time."

Untiedt and McKee, on the other hand, bought a spot overlooking Schmidt Lake, according to the former, "primarily for gardening potential on the three-quarter-acre landscaped lot. We wanted room for our desired

150 roses and new perennial gardens. We decided we wanted to build two koi ponds."

The ensuing project required 60 tons of rock, plus the construction of eight terraces, three bridges, three hidden waterfalls, multiple flower gardens, a bog pond, and a beach—and koi ponds. Having created "der Serenity-garten-Platz" (Serenity Garden Place), they were ready for Vujovich to tackle the house.

Lander and Broton underwent a total make-over, while Untiedt and McKee reworked their master bath. But no renovation is small when it's *your* home, and the result is more than the sum of lath and plaster involved.

Lander states, "The most important thing that Vujovich offered was communication and reassurance. I mean, let's face it: The biggest fears anyone has when beginning a major remodel are cost overruns, the ability to finish the project on time and on budget, and not ending up in bankruptcy court! Unbeknownst to us, we had decided to embark on this project at the beginning of the greatest economic crisis in US history since the Great Depression. Things could have definitely come out very badly indeed. But Vujovich was with us every step of the way."

Roskowinski assures, "It's not about ➡



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Lander and Broton thought in broad strokes, as the former recounts, "Jay wanted a two-car garage and a nicer garden. I wanted a gourmet kitchen. We both wanted a first-floor bathroom for guests. Other than that, we didn't have a great deal of needs or wants except to preserve the historic character of our home. Oh, yeah, and a fireplace—I wanted a fireplace. We got *two*—love 'em!"

Vujovich retained and restored the home's beautiful, warm-hued, handcrafted woodwork, paying minute attention to detail. It extended the Eastlake Lily floral motif, seen on the newel post of the main level landing, into the newly-constructed wood and hardware. It installed replica mother-of-pearl light-button switches that are actually modern dimmers.

The amount of life-disruption varies with the magnitude of the construction. Untiedt and McKee's renovation focused primarily on the master bath.

Untiedt shares that while the work itself took four months, "We only missed sleeping in the bedroom one night. This likely happened because of the excellent planning that took place over a three-month period."

Lander points out, "Jay and I were able to rent the first floor of the duplex right next door. Since our house had only one bathroom, which was getting a partial demolition, and we were doing a complete home renovation—walls, floors, ceilings, and a first-floor and basement addition—there was no way we could have lived in the home during any of the work."

Inevitably, given the laws of physics, Murphy, and local zoning, problems did arise in both projects.

Untiedt comments, "Our largest worry was moving the new granite counter and its two new sinks and faucets without damaging our first expensive home improvement [pre-Vujovich]. While we were told that there could be no guarantee, the Vujovich team assured us they would take every precaution



Untiedt-McKee remodeled master bath.

not to damage them—and that they did.

"We were told in the original Vujovich proposal that the remodeled bath-spa would be enhanced by installing a large elliptical dome and cove lighting. But the question came up: Would it be safe for the roof? Vujovich was quick to call in a structural engineer who suggested the necessary modifications. This remarkable change gave us both indirect light and the opportunity to use one of our old brass chandeliers that was hanging in the basement."

Lander remarks, "We had two major glitches with the building code. The first involved the 15-foot addition to the rear of our house. It turns out that our existing house was not built entirely square in its relation to the property lines. When you add 15 feet of additional wall to the back of our house, it encroaches upon our neighbor's property. As a result, we were required to petition our neighborhood zoning authority as well as the Minneapolis Zoning Board for a variance. Vujovich came to our neighborhood as well as the city's zoning board hearing to support our petition. Our petition prevailed, though it was actually a bit of a close call.

"The second gotcha occurred when we were notified by Vujovich a few days before construction was to begin that a recent change to the building code required that we install a \$5,000 egress window in our base-

ment. This incident nearly scuttled the entire project. However, the team at Vujovich accepted complete responsibility for this oversight of the building code change, and installed the window as required—gratis."

How do homeowners weather remodeling without the experience turning into a *Survivor* finale?

Lander muses, "I don't know. We were pretty close before the project. I do know, however, that we both love our home. We love spending time in our home alone and together. And the remodel represents something that we have created together, and will share with each other for many years to come."

Untiedt feels that the project "helped us in identifying our needs and priorities. It enhanced our ability to draw out the best in each other. We are proud of our home and the work that the Vujovich team did.

"About a year after our work was completed, Vujovich invited us to have a party, so that our friends could enjoy the project with us. Well over a hundred people came. One word seems to summarize how our guests saw the remodel: Superb!" **E.B. BOATNER**

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CREATING CHANGE CONFERENCE

Photos by Sophia Hantzes



AWARDS

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The Susan J. Hyde Activism Award for Longevity in the Movement: Kylar W. Broadus

(From left)
Sue Hyde, Director, The National Conference on LGBT Equality; Kylar W. Broadus; Rea Carey, Executive Director, National Gay and Lesbian Task Force.



The Sage Advocacy Award for Excellence in Leadership on Aging Issues: PFund Foundation.

(From left)
Robert Espinoza, Senior Director, Policy & Communications, Services & Advocacy for GLBT Elders (SAGE); Susan Raffo, Executive Director, Pfund Foundation; Kate Eubank, Executive Director, Pfund Foundation; Rea Carey, Executive Director, National Gay and Lesbian Task Force.



The Paul A. Anderson Award for Youth Leadership: Alyssa Veil.

(From left)
Sue Hyde, Director The National Conference on LGBT Equality; Scott Skywalker Frost, Executive Office Board Liaison, National Gay and Lesbian Task Force; Alyssa Veil, Senior, Blake School, Hopkins, Minnesota; Rea Carey, Executive Director, National Gay and Lesbian Task Force.

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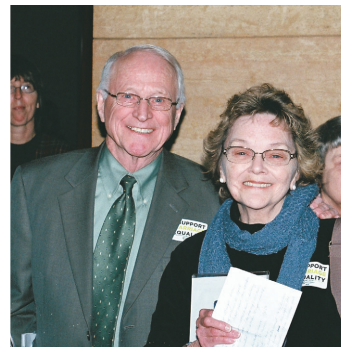


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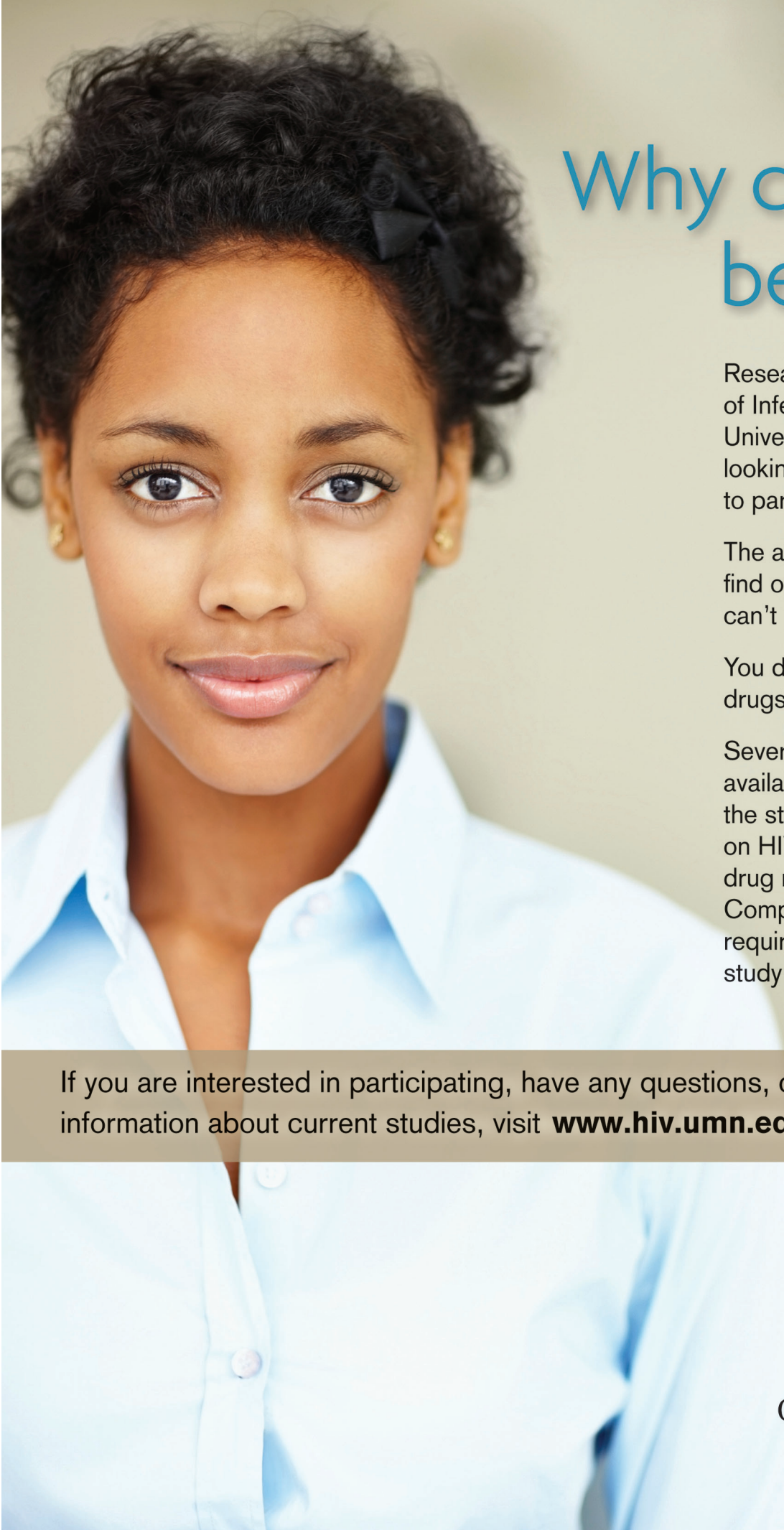
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MATTHEW SHEPARD FOUNDATION HOSTS BEAR TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE ON THE ROAD

Congressman Tim Walz Will Receive Making a Difference Award

In her book *The Meaning of Matthew: My Son's Murder in Laramie, and a World Transformed*, Judy Shepard described a crowd of 600 that gathered in Laramie, Wyoming, for a candlelight vigil on the eve of the jury selection in the trial of one of the killers of her son, who had succumbed after a savage beating almost exactly a year before, on October 12, 1998.

A tribute concert by Peter, Paul and Mary also took place. Before the concert, Peter Yarrow of the trio described how he had visited the wooden fence where 21-year-old Shepard had been tied, beaten, and left to die.

When Yarrow arrived at the fence, Judy Shepard related in the book, "He probably saw 150 teddy bears left there by two young men who had hiked the 80-mile journey from Fort Collins to Laramie and back again to bring the bears (each of which represented a different hate-crime victim) and leave them at the fence."

In the wake of the murder and trials, hundreds more teddy bears were created and donated to the family in Shepard's memory. Displayed at The Dancing Bear Museum and Folk Center in Thermopolis, Wyoming, they are used to educate school children about diversity. In like manner, they are a tangible reminder of the national and international response to a hate crime that shook our nation, and resonated with children and adults around the world.

Dennis and Judy Shepard created the Matthew Shepard Foundation to honor their son in a manner appropriate to his dreams, beliefs, and aspirations. Its aim is to "Replace Hate with Understanding, Com-



Judy Shepard. Photos Courtesy of Matthew Shepard Foundation.

passion and Acceptance."

In 2002, a group in Denver established a benefit for the foundation in which prominent local personalities designed and dressed teddy bears in their image. The event has grown to become the largest-annual fundraiser for the organization, with attendees from around the nation.

On March 11, Judy Shepard and members of the foundation will be at the Graves 601 Hotel in Minneapolis for the second-annual Bear to Make a Difference on the Road. The highlight will be a silent auction of 50 celebrity signed/inspired teddy bears from donors including Michael Bubl , James Earl Jones, Lady Gaga, Dolly Parton, Meryl Streep, and dozens more. Admission in-



Congressman Tim Walz.

cludes a signed copy of *The Meaning of Matthew* and an official 2011 Bear on the Road Minneapolis Teddy Bear.

In addition, the foundation will present its Making a Difference Award to Minnesota First District Congressman Tim Walz, who voted in favor of the enacted Matthew Shepard and James Byrd, Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act and the proposed Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA). Sculpted by renowned artist Chris Navarro, it is given annually to "an individual who has shown a commitment to educating the greater community on diversity, respect, and human rights."

Walz stated, "Every violent crime is devastating to the victim and his or her family, regardless of whether the crime is random

or motivated by some other reason. But hate crimes are committed against more than just those attacked—they are often intended to create anxiety and spread fear. This legislation starts to make sure that law enforcement officials have the resources they need to prosecute these despicable crimes. Every American deserves opportunity without fear of being discriminated against because of who they are.”

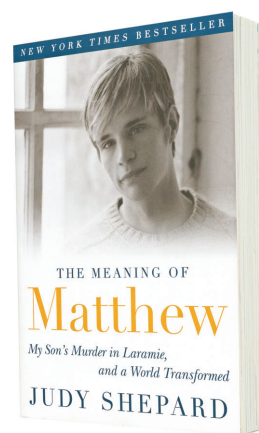
Regarding the award, Walz remarked, “I am honored and humbled to be receiving this award. Judy Shepard has literally inspired a generation of Americans to justice, and I am proud to call her a friend. I am proud to strongly support civil rights for all Americans, and I believe the principle of tolerance our great nation was founded on is nonnegotiable. I will accept this award knowing that I share it with everyone who has been an advocate for justice, with anyone who has stood up for equality in large or small ways, and that we will not rest until every American is treated with the dignity and respect they deserve.”

Judy Shepard pointed out, “This event in Minneapolis is just part of the work the foundation is doing. Anything that can raise aware-

ness of the issues is positive, and to be a part of that is an honor. There has always been a special connection between the Twin Cities and the foundation and to us personally. We have family in the area, and have been here many times and have always felt welcome. I think Minnesota is a very important part of the movement to advance equality for the gay, lesbian, and transgender communities.”

Shepard shared some thoughts with *Lavender*.

- On the “It Gets Better” movement: “Anything that raises awareness about a shared experience is good—especially if the outcome is positive.”
- On changes in attitudes toward gay youth in the 12 years since Matthew Shepard’s death: “It seems that the younger generations have been exposed to LGBT stories all their lives—that only leads to more understanding. Progress is being made in urgency and priority, but getting widespread cooperation is difficult.”
- On continued growth of antigay feelings and activities in the far religious right: “No. I don’t think it is growing—in fact, I’m seeing a shift in focus from some of these organizations, particularly among the younger congregants.”



- On the possibilities for change: “There is always hope. A personal epiphany is always a great game-changer.” **E.B. BOATNER**

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STUDY SHOWS HOMOPHOBIA IS BAD FOR YOUR HEALTH

The Montreal Gazette reports that a new study from Montreal's Concordia University finds antigay bullying causes a hormonal disruption known to increase rates of suicide, memory loss, cardiovascular problems, and bone-density depletion. Study author Michael Benibgui said, "This shows that homophobia is bad for your health." It is the first to demonstrate a biological link between bullying and long-lasting physical and psychological problems.

POLICE SAY MALE PROSTITUTE KILLED UGANDA GAY ACTIVIST

According to Agence France-Presse (AFP), Uganda's Chief of Police has told journalists that the murder of gay-rights activist David Kato was not a hate crime. Instead, police stated that 22-year-old Enoch Nsubuga murdered Kato after he refused to pay Nsubuga as promised for sex. Police say Nsubuga, who was arrested, confessed to the crime.

POLAND'S RULING PARTY REPRIMANDS LAWMAKER

The Canadian Press reports that Poland's ruling party has reprimanded lawmaker Robert Wegrzyn for recent antigay remarks he made. He criticized the prospect of gay marriage, but said he'd "gladly watch" lesbians. He could be fined up to \$350 for the statement.

TRANSGENDER WOMAN TOLD TO DRESS MALE FOR JOB

Tina Cook, a 54-year-old transgender woman in the United Kingdom, says a job counselor told her that she'd have a better chance of getting a job if she dressed like a man. She has been undergoing the gender-reassignment process since last year, after she lost her job as a construction worker. A spokesman for the United Kingdom Department for Work and Pensions has responded to Cook's complaint by stating, "Jobcentre Plus is committed to treating all individuals fairly and equally. We are aware of this complaint, and are investigating." **WRITTEN & COMPILED BY**

BRADLEY TRAYNOR

Good and Pawlenty

When you think of former Minnesota Governors who find themselves in the media spotlight for making controversial statements, it's usually a certain longhaired former pro wrestler who comes to mind, Jesse Ventura.

Since January, however, our most recent former Governor has usurped that honor handily. Tim Pawlenty, in his apparent bid for the Republican Party's presidential nomination, has made headlines on more than one occasion already this year for statements that have raised the ire not only of his opponents, but also of many even within his own party. And the good gays and lesbians of this country again are paying the price for his political haymaking.

In January, Pawlenty promised that, if elected President, he would reinstate the military's ban on openly gay service members. Even though majorities of the American people—as well as military service members and their families, military commanders, and politicians from both political parties—supported lifting the ban, he knows better. Less than a month later, he doubled-down on that promise, pledging to rescind any funding necessary to implement the repeal.

Yes, that's right. In the year 2011, a serious contender for the presidency of the United States from a mainstream political party wants to walk-back legislation extending the country's constitutional promise of equality to more of its citizens. His great vision for the future of America is one where its citizens only are entitled to equality if they relinquish their dignity, and lie to their government, their peers, and their country.

You'd be forgiven for wondering whether Pawlenty has been drinking from the same cup of crazy punch as Congresswoman Michele Bachmann.

I don't think so. You don't have to dig deep to realize that, unlike Bachmann, Pawlenty is no conservative ideologue. He is simply an effective politician. By that, I mean your run-of-the-mill, finger-in-the-

wind blowhard, willing to exploit people for his own political gain.

This time around, Pawlenty apparently is clinging to the political formula that to succeed in the Republican presidential primary, he must align himself with the far-right social and religious conservative machinery of the party. Were he to win the nomination, much like every other successful presidential candidate, I imagine you'd start to see him moderate his beliefs to appeal to a broader electorate.

I believe just that kind of cold-hearted calculation is fundamentally more dangerous over the long term than the likes of Crazy Eyes Bachmann. I have a sneaking suspicion that unlike Pawlenty, she actually believes the outlandish things she says. She stridently trumpets her gospel of crazy, regardless of the political consequences. She rarely shows any desire to moderate her own mania for strategic gain.

Hence, Bachmann is only popular so long as her beliefs are popular. As attitudes and opinions evolve, she and her fellow Neanderthals are prone to extinction.

Pawlenty, however, repeatedly has shown that ideology is a mere means to his own political end. In 1993, for example, he supported expanding Minnesota's Human Rights Act to cover sexual orientation and gender identity. During the 2002 Governor's race, he "regretted" his vote—to appease social conservatives in his party. That's but one of many times he has used Minnesota's GLBT community to grab votes.

A politician willing to exploit his fellow citizens to get ahead may not be all that uncommon, but he's dangerous nonetheless. History is replete with political leaders scapegoating minority groups for short-term political power. I only can hope that the very extremists within the party he's courting see through Pawlenty's thinly-veiled "strategy."

I honestly believe gay people would be served better if Republicans nominated Bachmann. Trying to watch her moderate her fanatical ramblings at least would make for great reality TV. **BRADLEY TRAYNOR**

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Ma Rainey's Black Bottom. Photo by Michal Daniel

Ma Rainey's Black Bottom • [Through Mar. 6](#) • Guthrie Theater • 818 S. 2nd St., Mpls. • (612) 377-2224 • www.guthrietheater.org

Cap off Black History Month with Jevetta Steele, who brings ferocity, raunchy vocals, and tyrannical force to the role of Gertrude "Ma" Rainey, "The Mother of the Blues." She is a woman who never gave an inch, because hard knocks as a black performer taught her that in the 1920s, you had to be tough and territorial about your star power. In August Wilson's 1982 play, she is at odds not only with white record producers, but also with Levee (James T. Alfred), a hotheaded black trumpeter who has the hots for her sexy assistant, Dussie Mae (a steamy Lerea Carter). Ma's lesbianism never is discussed overtly, but emanates from Steele's marvelous performance. Lou Bellamy directs this Penumbra/Guthrie show with piercing intensity.

Gaytino!

[Through Feb. 27](#)

Gremlin Theatre
2400 University Ave. W., St. Paul
(800) 838-3006
www.teatrodelpueblo.com

This one-person show, written and directed by Dan Guerrero, which premiered five years ago in LA, has been acclaimed by critics, and played to crowds in more than a dozen cities including Washington, DC. Through music and words, he reflects on growing up gay and Chicano. *Gaytino!* relates his relationship with his musician

father, Eduardo "Lalo" Guerrero, as well as his experience as a Broadway talent agent. It plays as part of Teatro del Pueblo's *10th Annual Political Theatre Festival: Latinos in Transition*. *Hispanic Magazine* called Dan Guerrero "one of the most powerful Latinos in Hollywood."

MEAN

[Through Feb. 27](#)

Howard Conn Fine Arts Center
1900 Nicollet Ave., Mpls.
(612) 623-9080
www.youthperformanceco.com

Rita Cannon is right-up-to-the-minute with her new bullying drama. One of the play's story lines focuses on a high school student named Nick (Shawn Chromey-Daniels).

Cannon says, "Nick gets consistently bullied by a group of guys at school for being gay, despite the fact that he's never said anything conclusive about his orientation one way or another. The guys who tease him have apparently decided he's gay because he is shy, plays guitar, and doesn't have a girlfriend. The teasing con-



The Balcony. Photo by Josh Cragun

tinues to get worse over a period of months, until Nick finally gets into a physical fight with one of his tormentors, and gets suspended from school. This forces him to tell his mother [Stephanie Miller] what's been going on, and the two of them struggle with what to do about the situation."

The Balcony

[Through Mar. 6](#)

nimbus Theatre
1517 Central Ave. NE, Mpls.
(612) 548-1380
www.nimbustheatre.com

Ironically, many assimilationist gays reject Jean Genet (1910-1986) because he presents a "negative" gay image. Nonetheless, he looms as an utterly world-class titan of literature. For GLBT folks in the mid-20th-Century, he was a beloved rebel who subverted unexamined sexual morality. Existentialist writer Jean-Paul Sartre dubbed him "Saint Genet."

Josh Cragun directs the Genet classic *The Balcony* that equates society's hierarchy with that of a brothel. In our day of Wall Street high rollers paying hundreds of thousands for hookers (see the searing new documentaries *Client 9* and Oscar-nominated *Inside Job*), it seems a timely choice for revival.

Cragun observes, "Genet was a writer who wrote so provocatively, so firmly about his identity as a gay man that when *The Balcony* was written in the 1950s, his work had already been banned wholesale in the United States. Growing up as an orphan in one of France's most conservative provinces, he found himself on the outside of society, eventually becoming a thief, prostitute, and wanderer, observing society ➡



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ARTS ♦ ON THE TOWNSEND



Bill W. and Dr. Bob.

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from afar, and eventually becoming one of France's greatest writers, harnessing a prophetic voice. Genet's fascination with male hierarchies—the church, the military, the courts—and his unabashed willingness to discuss sexuality in open terms are woven throughout the show."

Bill W. and Dr. Bob

Through Mar. 6

Illusion Theater
 528 Hennepin Ave., Mpls.
 (612) 339-4944

www.illusiontheater.org

Stephen Bergman and Janet Surrey's play is about how Dr. Bob Smith (Terry Hempleman) and Bill Wilson (Phillip Callan) founded Alcoholics Anonymous. But it also portrays their wives, who made an equally-historic contribution.

Actress Carolyn Pool shares, "I play Lois Wilson, who, with Anne Smith [Beth Gilleland], essentially started Al-Anon, the support group for families of alcoholics. Lois became a true figurehead in the AA movement for her constant, if somewhat challenging, devotion to her husband, and his work to beat his own dependency and his work to help others. This play is not just the story of two men and their struggles, and the struggles of their families, but of the millions of people affected by addiction." ■

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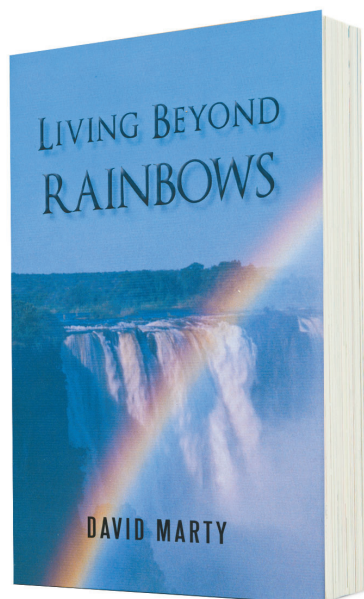
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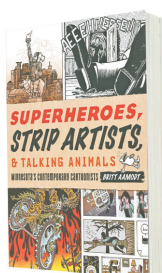
Living Beyond Rainbows • David Marty • iUniverse • \$29.95

This memoir by local author David Marty offers a candid view of the life of a gay boy, the fourth of six siblings raised in a Missouri Synod Lutheran home. It makes abundantly clear the fortitude and persistence needed for a gay man to establish himself both in the community and in his own eyes. He's a second-generation chiropractor who has a healing instinct for working with people with AIDS and elderly patients. Marty uses his long-standing friendship and professional relationship with Esther, in her 90s when we meet her, as a spiritual thread to knit together his narrative. Having outlived two husbands and many caretakers, she is able to provide a strong role model for acceptance and self-esteem, to help teach her young gay friend that life is indeed a gift to be cherished. Marty, who has worked in his chosen profession for more than 30 years, currently lives with his partner of 23 years—and their dogs—in Minneapolis.



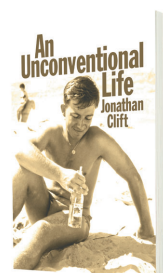
Scandinavian Classic Baking • Pat Sinclair • Pelican Publishing Co. • \$16.95

Swedish Limpa, Norwegian Julecake...Chocolate Butter Logs, Finnish Browned Butter Teaspoon Cookies...Triple Berry Crumble, Swedish Pepparkakor, Norwegian Lefse, Swedish Spritz—right away, you know you're in for some heavenly treats. Doesn't the very word "Sandbakkels" make you want to reach for the platter? Local award-winning cookbook author Pat Sinclair here offers 40 luscious recipes that showcase the cakes, breads, cookies, tarts, fruit desserts, and pastries of Northern Europe. Sidebars accompanying each recipe offer rich, illustrated morsels of Scandinavian photographs, travel information, and cooking tips—"how to fold," "how to beat egg whites," "pâté à choux"—to entertain and instruct while heating up the oven. Minnesota photographer Joel Butkowski's mouthwatering recipe photographs make the reader eager to fire up the oven, and get started. Sinclair's first book, *Baking Basics and Beyond*, received the Cordon d'Or Gold Ribbon from the Academy of Culinary Arts.



Superheroes, Strip Artists, & Talking Animals: Minnesota's Contemporary Cartoonists • Britt Aamodt • Minnesota Historical Society Press • \$29.95

Would you have guessed that 23 Minnesota cartoonists *were* plying their work among us? Aamodt has winkled them out, and coaxed them to talk about their work, which encompasses comics, graphic novels, editorial cartoons, minicomics, and the expanding field of web comics. She has included bios of the chosen artists with informative information on how they came to be cartoonists: ur-prodigy Christopher Jones of *Dr. Blink: Superhero* had a published strip at 10. Most, like Doug Mahnke, stress the importance of discipline and hard work. Others include Kirk Anderson, Gordon Purcell, Britteny Sabo, and Barbara Schulz. Aamodt deals here specifically with contemporary artists, but old-timers can't forget that Wally Wood, the great *EC/Mad* Magazine artist, was born in Minnesota, and that even the incomparable Carl Barks of Donald Duck fame did time in Minneapolis in 1931 on the *Calgary Eye-Opener*.



An Unconventional Life • Jonathan Clift • Lulu • \$11.51

Clift uses an interesting voice for his main character, John, a young gay man coming of age in pre-AIDS 1960s Britain. John narrates his story in a direct, forthright, in-the-present manner that lends a certain freshness and naïveté to his voice. Loosely based on the author's own life, the story starts with teenager John attracted to, then seduced by, his friend, Mark. John, who always has assumed he will be married by the time he is 25, believes their affair is just a youthful crush. However, when Mark and he are parted, and John enters the Royal Air Force, he realizes that he is gay. He recounts his first gay sexual encounter there, including a real love for an officer named Joe who is sent away to a foreign post as punishment. John is reunited with, then loses, Mark, and finds, then loses, another. In the end, John reaches a plateau of self-acceptance and inner peace. The sequel is *A Smoldering Flame*. ■

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Photo by George Holdgrafer

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February 13

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Photos by Hubert Bonnet

TICKLES HAS NEW SIBLING: SCORE IS GAY SPORTS BAR

Over the past two years, Tickles owner Roy Caples and manager Joel Janssen constantly have transformed their establishment. It opened in a smaller space in Northeast Minneapolis on November 14, 2008, but moved to larger quarters in Downtown Minneapolis on December 31, 2009. In its newest incarnation, since early February, it is two bars under one roof: Score and Tickles.

Caples says, "We have always emphasized the sports concept. We now have Tickles piano lounge and Score sports bar, with 11 large-screen TVs and sports team sponsorships, plus a full-service menu, wines, spirits, and beers to choose from."

As Caples explains, "We have moved the piano lounge into the front area of the bar,

with windows that look outside, while maintaining the sports theme in the main bar. Along with this, we have an expanded room with pool tables, games, and dart boards."

Since it debuted, Tickles has provided first-rate live entertainment, which continues, according to Caples: "We have entertainment in the Tickles lounge on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday. Thursday features the Tickles Cast Party, with people coming from throughout the Minneapolis theatrical community. Hosted by Whitney Rhodes, it's open to all guests, singing along with Tickles piano player Joey Clark. Friday and Saturday will showcase live entertainment that includes the likes of Mia Dorr, Gary Collins, Jimmy Martin, and others."

Tickles has built a reputation for excel-

lent food, and Caples shares, "We are adding new items to our menu, and will have new specials."

In addition, Caples points out, "We provide a great space for meetings, birthdays, and anniversaries."

The dual bar is open Monday-Friday, 4 PM-2 AM, and Saturday-Sunday, 10 AM-2 AM.

Regarding Score and Tickles, as Caples puts it, "We continue to evolve to meet the tastes and needs of the customers we serve."

GEORGE HOLDGRAFER

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BAR CALENDAR

For club addresses, phone numbers, and websites, see "Out on the Town Advertiser Guide" on page 40. For events not at bars, see <LavenderMagazine.com/calendar>.



SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 26

Imperial Court of Minnesota Empress Ball

Benefits Rural AIDS Action Network (RAAN)

5 PM. Gay 90's.

Elegance

9 PM. Town House.

KnightRider Stallionerr

Drag King Show

Coale's

SATURDAY, MARCH 5

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9 PM. Town House.

FRIDAY, MARCH 11

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A

s a rule, Twin Cities foodies aren't fixated on fine dining. Restaurateurs, do not come here looking for hordes of jacket-and-tie enthusiasts, reservation elitists, or followers of the Michelin star, but rather to find down-to-earth foodies who revel in excellent local produce, inventiveness, and a little something else. We have a very refined, cultivated appreciation for the weird. Say hello to the kings of camp and the masters of kitschy kitchen.

Some of our favorite hot spots look like they were plucked directly from a David Lynch film. One is Nye's Polonaise Room, obviously, but if strange organist karaoke/polka isn't your thing, then Donnie Dirk's Zombie Den has bartender uniforms featuring faux blood-smeared aprons. Just like Nye's and Donnie Dirk's, on any given weekend, the motorcycle punk/tropical-themed Psycho Suzi's Motor Lounge will be packed. The old location only allowed the place to fly its freaky tiki flag so high, but at the new digs, it's game *on*. From the enormous indoor water feature and "faux wood plank"

carpeting to the superhappy fun-themed bars upstairs and its darksider staff, the establishment brings a thoroughly bizarre take on the tropics.

If you ask me, it actually works pretty well together. Just close your eyes, and think of World War II Hawaii—tattooed, battle-hardened servicemen, smack-dab in the

middle of the government's sanctioned red light district—and voilà: Psycho Suzi's.

We started with a couple of rum slushes, such as the Psycho Zombie (\$8.95)—a rum and coke with a very heavy hit of lime, served in an olive green tiki cup. We also split the Aku Rum (\$8.95), which balances out its heavy citrus with guava and "various rums,"

and is served in a rather chipper-looking Easter Island head glass. The tiki cups are yours to take home for an additional \$5. Slushes only have been on the menu since Psycho Suzi's relocated, so if you haven't tried one, make sure to proceed with caution—they go down supereasy, and make you feel like a small-town prom queen. ➡



Suzi's Burger.

The Suzi Burger is a package of beefy splendor, topped with caramelized onion, provolone cheese, and red pepper mayo.

The drink menu is extensive here, and worth throwing a little caution to the wind. For example, we also really dug the Miserable Bastard (\$8.95). One of the nonslush drinks, it's named for its limey bite and dark rum base—and, of course, served in a grumpy-looking tiki mug. However, if you're really brave—or just having a really

bad day—you could spring for a large drink (\$11), or a very, very large drink meant to be shared (\$19). If you're bringing a date, you might want to brush up on your oral maraschino-stem acrobatics. After a few slushes, this skill can become important.

To soak it up, we eagerly scanned the food menu. Knowing so many people come



Chicken Gremlins

here solely for the drinks and the ambience, I wasn't expecting the food to be as much of a feature, but I was so pleasantly surprised.

We first sampled appetizers. Dry Rub Wings (\$8.45) are fragrant, with Island-inspired spices and just a touch of brown sugar, fried to a crisp that is neither greasy nor wanting. Fried Asparagus (\$6.95), beer-battered and deep-fried, is served with Sriracha-mayo sauce that was so good, I swear it made me tipsier than the cocktails.

Emboldened, we ordered Paradise City Pizza (\$15.75-\$23.95). I have to admit, it's nothing I ever would have ordered for myself. Canadian bacon often tastes a little tinny and hollow on pizza for my taste, but at Psycho Suzi's, it is mitigated with a spicy tomato sauce base and rum-soaked ➤

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One of the popular tiki drinks.

raisins to add just a little earthiness. We ordered the thin-crust version, and I enjoyed the not-too-hard, not-too-soft crust. If you want to fold your slice of pizza, you certainly could, but it also balances on your fingers without either slumping into your lap or cutting the inside of your cheek.

The Suzi Burger (\$9.75) is a package of beefy splendor, topped with caramelized onion, provolone cheese, and red pepper mayo. It comes with those ambrosial tuberific wonders known to us mere mortals as tater tots. Best of all, underneath all that, you still can taste the meat on the burger, which was cooked to that perfect “best-of-both-worlds” medium. All in all, this burger walks the fine line between casual diner fare and upscale gourmet, without losing its sense of nostalgia and play.

If you have any room left, S’mores Platter



Dining area.

(\$12.95) is the perfect ending to an already-surreal experience. Pieces of candy bar, peanut butter cups, marshmallows, and graham crackers are served pu pu platter—style, meant to share. It takes a little longer to cook the marshmallow over that little flame if you’re prissy about it, but no matter your style, it’s totally worth it for the messy, sticky delight that follows.

So come, Twin Cities, for the drinks and the ambience if that’s what will get you in to Psycho Suzi’s. But please, my queer dears, stay for the food. **HEIDI FELLNER**

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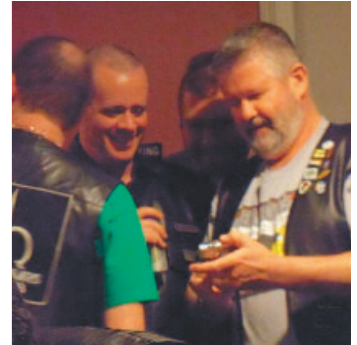
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Following on successful events the past three years, North Country Bears is hosting Fur Flee: Fourever in the Twin Ports of Duluth, Minnesota, and Superior, Wisconsin, March 3-6.

Organizers have reserved the entire Barkers Island Inn, 300 Marina Drive, Superior—but if it is booked to capacity, an overflow hotel is available.

A weekend Flee Collar package includes the following: Bar Night, March 3, The Main Club, 1217 Tower Avenue, Superior; Bar Night, March 4, The Flame, 1612 Tower Avenue, Superior; Poolside Party featuring DJ Michael Carrera from San Diego, March 5, Barkers Island Inn; discounts at the Duluth Sauna, 18 North First Avenue East, Duluth; and more.

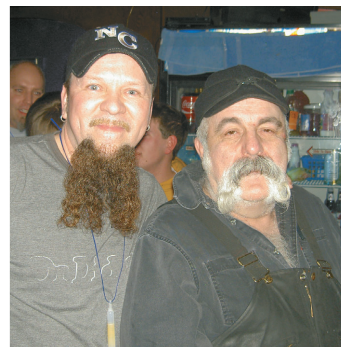
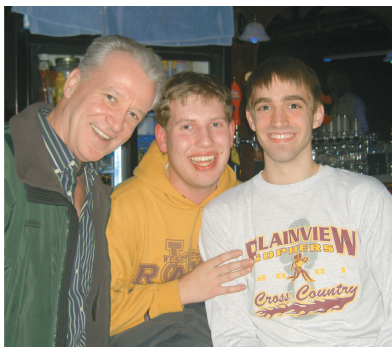
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BOBYLON II

February 5
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Superior, Wisconsin

Photos by George Holdgrafer



HOW TO BREATHE SWEETLY

Sunday sounds like my mom yelling at my brother. It sounds like women gossiping and crackles in a frying pan.

It's my grandfather telling rhymes and tall tales of times gone by. It's my friends playing, the porch swing squeaking, football commentators on TV. It's the smell of fried chicken and collard greens. It's the scent of my grandmother's moisturizer. It's 50¢ coins and \$2 bills. It's new crayons and construction paper, fresh-cut grass, and wind in my face.

It's finding just the right sweetness in all the right places. It's knowing that we haven't got much, but we've got all we need. It's loving hard, laughing loud, and remembering the best in who we are.

My clothes came from Kmart as a child. My haircuts were done at Fantastic Sam's. Our groceries came from a mom-and-pop shop where the gossip flowed as fast as Mrs. Jenkins's denial about her husband's affair.

We never went hungry. I had plenty of toys. Mom had her dresses. Grandma and Grandpa played their poker. We never wanted more than just what we had.

Sundays after church were spent with family around fried chicken and collard greens, sweet tea, and lemon meringue pie. I prized this ritual even then—and now, I long for just one more story around that table, for just one more swing on the porch.

We all sigh when we hear our elders talk about treasures in their pasts. Our legs fall asleep listening to long-winded recounts of days when the world was a little bit nicer—when everything was so much easier.

We listen anyway, though, because that's how we were brought up—and as soon as we see a way out, off we run into the seclusion



of our Facebook profiles and smart phones.

Isn't it interesting, then, to feel the way we do about our own histories? The past becomes more and more attractive the farther we get from it.

Things change fast.

I was told that I'd make something of myself one day. My family told me that there was more to have in life than what I grew up with. One day, they told me, I'd chase my imagination into a world I only could dream of.

Today, my fortunes seem bigger. I buy my clothes where I want to. I get my hair cut at extravagant salons. I always eat out. And I spend a ridiculous amount on entertainment.

Yes, the money is better than it was as a kid playing Store with my grandmother's groceries, but it's not quite as nice as it was wrapped up in Grandma's arms in her rocking chair, flipping through photo albums, and asking silly questions.

Things change. My grandmother's house is now bereft of our family. The young ones in the Sunday crowd went on to start their own families, and pursue big-shot careers. They slowly trickled away after our matri-

arch passed on.

We now have only these heartbreaking yet wonderful memories of how things were. We have dulled pictures that prep us for our own stories to our children one day—of days that were easier, less-pretentious.

By no means was my childhood free of tragedy. Like you, I've experienced horrors I am grateful to have overcome. My family was there, though—to make me laugh, to make me forget, to show me the truth about what was important. They toughened me up, and propelled me into who I've become.

I'm 24, and I can't help but think about what comes next. Will I one day look to my 20s, and feel the nostalgia I do for my childhood? Will I think, "Gosh, I miss that cold, not-even-close-to-homey Uptown apartment?"

As soon as I begin to worry, I'm reminded of the very thing that made me happy as a child, that talent only the ones we love can impart to us: to find just the right sweetness in all the right places.

Will I miss me now? Will you miss you? Maybe. The great thing about it, though, is that we're still us—we always will be—and if we take life one porch swing at a time, maybe, just maybe, our memories won't just be treasures in our pasts, but treasures as we make them.

Let's go off together, then, you and me. Let's slow down for just a second, and think about where we are, instead of where we're headed. Let's keep our eye on the prize—our hearts on the present—and when we're faced with times we wish would just disappear, our minds on the notion that things get better.

Live loud. Laugh hard. Love deep. But always, always breathe sweetly. **JUSTIN JONES**



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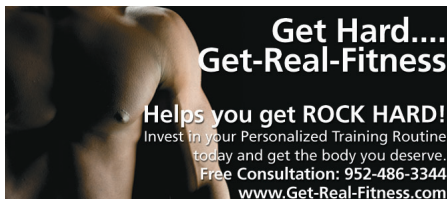


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CALENDAR

FEBRUARY-MARCH

24

Thursday, February

Nest. Table Salt Productions presents *Nest*, a world-premiere play by Rachael Brogan Flanery, directed by Rebecca Rizzio (Theater Unbound). Featuring a stellar cast of local talent, it gives the audience a voyeuristic peek into Katherine and her mother's attempts at building a relationship before it's too late. Look for drama; laughs; lasagna; and, of course, Christmas in July. Through Mar. 12. Lowry Lab Theater, 350 St. Peter St., St. Paul. <www.tablesaltproductions.com>.

28

Monday, February



Paula Poundstone. Photo by Michael Schwartz

Paula Poundstone. Appearing onstage with a stool, a microphone, and a can of Diet Pepsi, Paula Poundstone is famous for

her razor-sharp wit and spontaneity. It's impossible to attend a Paula Poundstone performance without marveling at her ability to interact spontaneously with audience members, who leave her live shows often leave complaining that their cheeks hurt from laughter. 7:30 PM. Guthrie Theater, Wurtele Thrust Stage, 818 S. 2nd St., Mpls. (612) 377-2224. <www.guthrietheater.org>.

1

Tuesday, March

HAIR. With a score including such groundbreaking numbers as "Let The Sun Shine In," "Aquarius," "Hair," and "Good Morning Starshine," *HAIR* depicts the birth of a cultural movement in the 1960s and 1970s that changed America forever. The musical follows a group of hopeful, free-spirited young people who advocate a lifestyle of pacifism and free love in a society riddled with intolerance and brutality during the Vietnam War. Through Mar. 6. Orpheum Theatre, 910 Hennepin Ave., Mpls. (612) 373-5665. <www.hennepintheatretrust.org>.

ONGOING

Agnes Under the Big Top. Mixed Blood Theatre presents the world premiere of *Agnes Under the Big Top*, Aditi Brennan Kapil's funny and powerful new work that imagines the intersecting lives of immigrants in today's America. She also directs this magical adventure. Under the figurative Big Top, and propelled by the rhythms of a subway train, five newcomers find and redefine themselves in their new land: Agnes, a Liberian homemaker employed by bedridden Ella; an itinerant transit busker; a Bulgarian ringmaster and his wife; and an Indian call-center escapee. Combining a gray subterranean world with music, clowning, and unexpected junctions, this play follows the characters' journeys, as they search for beauty amid the chaos of migration. Through Mar. 6. Mixed Blood Theatre, 1501 S. 4th St., Mpls. (612) 338-6131. <www.mixedbloodtheatre.com>.

The Balcony. nimbus christens its new permanent home with a production of Jean Genet's *The Balcony*, considered one of the colorful and controversial French drama-

tist's masterworks. It's set in an exclusive brothel at the center of a revolution that threatens the established regime. As the situation outside becomes more volatile, a plan is formulated to reestablish the status quo using the trappings of authority from the brothel's studios. The patrons' fantasies are fulfilled as they appear in public, posing as the figures of authority, while the revolution threatens to overwhelm them. Through Mar. 6. nimbus, 1517 Central Ave. NE, Ste. 300, Mpls. (612) 548-1379. <www.nimbustheatre.com>.

Bill W. & Dr. Bob. This play is a remarkable and humorous story set around the lives—and, more importantly, the friendship of—Bill Wilson (Phillip Callan) and Dr. Bob Smith (Terry Hempleman). Bill, a down-and-out stockbroker, and Bob, a surgeon from Ohio, were both alcoholics who, through a surprising series of events, met, and formed the world-changing friendship responsible for the creation of Alcoholics Anonymous. A universal story of the dangers of isolation, and the healing powers of good connections, the play returns with its original cast for its second run at Illusion Theater. Through Mar. 13. Illusion Theater, 528 Hennepin Ave., Mpls. (612) 339-4944. <www.illusiontheater.org>.

Doubt, A Parable. Can you get at the truth when it is so colored by our lenses of experience? Ten Thousand Things explores this central question with *Doubt, A Parable*, in which Peter Rothstein guest-directs Sally Wingert and Kris Nelson in this fiery battle between a nun and a priest over the suspicion of sexual abuse of a child. Through Mar. 6. Open Book, 1011 Washington Ave. S., Mpls. <www.tenthousandthings.org>.

Leave. Urban Samurai Productions presents world premiere of *Leave*. Focusing on the emotional fallout from the US military's Don't Ask, Don't Tell policy barring gay and lesbian personnel from serving their country openly, the play straddles this time of before and after the recent repeal of the policy, and the lingering effects of enforced secrecy and lies on relationships both old and new. It follows a young Marine serving during wartime, his civilian husband back home, and the people in their lives who must help them deal with the emotional strain of hiding their relationship. Through Feb. 26. Sabes Jewish Community Center, 4330 Cedar Lake Rd. S., Mpls. <www.urbandsamurai.org> or <www.sabesjcc.org>.

Ring Round the Moon. Theatre in the Round Players presents the classic romantic farce *Ring Round the Moon* by Jean Anouilh (translated by Christopher Fry). A grand ball is the setting for an enchanted evening of innocent young lovers, mistaken identities, scheming sophisticates, and identical twin brothers. It is French playwright Anouilh's most-produced work



Ring Round the Moon.
Photo Copyright Act One, Too, Ltd.

in this country, a fairy-tale atmosphere with a smart satirical bite, funny and utterly charming. Leah Cooper directs a cast of 12, including Nicholas Leeman as twin brothers Hugo and Frederick, Maggie Bearmon Pistner as Madame Desmortes, Rachel Weber as Diana, and Lindsay Marcy as Isabelle. Sets are designed by Andrea Heilman and Kate Elise, costumes by Sarah French, and lighting by Peter Mitchell. Through Mar. 6. Theatre in the Round, 245 Cedar Ave., Mpls. (612) 333-3010. <www.TheatreintheRound.org>.

Shirley Valentine. At the age of 42, Shirley Valentine's marriage and life are in a rut. Her world is one of kitchens, cooking, and faded dreams. She longs to "drink a glass of wine in the country where grapes are grown," so when a friend invites her on holiday to Greece, she packs her bag without a second thought, ditching the drudgery of housework in hopes of adventure and love. Bain Boehlke directs Cheryl Willis, who hails from Liverpool, England, in the title role. This award-winning, one-woman show is a witty, heartfelt comedy about breaking free, living life, and starting over. Thorough Mar. 20. Jungle Theater, 2951 Lyndale Ave. S., Mpls. (612) 822-7063. <www.jungletheater.com>.

Vampire Lesbians of Sodom. Continuing its tradition of presenting the works of playwright Charles Busch, Brazen Theatre Company stages the long-running New York hit about a pair of vampiresses who meet in ancient Sodom, and continue their bloodsucking rivalry through 2,000 years, from the old days of Sodom to the silent movie era of Hollywood to contemporary Las Vegas. Through Feb. 26. Lowry Lab Theatre, 350 St. Peter St., St. Paul. <www.brazentheatre.org>.

For additional calendar events, visit <www.LavenderMagazine.com>.

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Riding the Rails: A Love Story

It's Day 3 of my train trip from Chicago to San Francisco. I am covered in a fine layer of slime that is the result of spending 60 hours in Amtrak's "deluxe" sleeper cabin. I'm not sure what dictionary the railroad used to define "deluxe," but I suspect it was one written in a third-world country that considers cholera an acceptable risk factor in modern travel.

It's Midnight, and I've been jolted awake by one of the sudden, mysterious stops that have put us 12 hours behind schedule. I climb over the netting designed to keep riders from falling out of their bunks, and make my way to my private bathroom. It's a small, stainless steel room, like the type used to hose down inmates in an insane asylum.

I climb back into my bunk, and giggle. I'm filthy and hungry, trapped on a train in the middle of nowhere, with no idea of when or if I ever will arrive at my destination. And I couldn't be happier.

I never have been camping, and refuse to stay in anything less than a four-star hotel. I love good food, good wine, and good company. Yet, in spite of all this, I also love Amtrak.

Once you board the train, time stands still. You are trapped for days with a weird collection of fellow travelers, bound by bad

food, erratic scheduling, insouciant porters, and public-health threats. Like strangers marooned on a deserted island, you have no choice but to form allegiances, and figure out a way to survive together.

The typical Amtrak population can be broken down into four categories:

- (1) The Amish
- (2) Recently released convicts
- (3) Senior citizens
- (4) Socially-conservative Republicans

I gravitate to the Amish and convicts.

I absolutely am fascinated by the Amish, but, then, who isn't? They want nothing to do with me, which only makes me love them more.

On this trip, I was smitten with an Amish woman I often found huddled in the corner of the observation car, hoarding snack food. She ate it compulsively, stuffing chips into her mouth while staring blankly out the window. When she finally ran out of snacks, I slowly pushed a bag of Fritos across the table, in the same way you would try to lure a suspicious squirrel with a chestnut. As soon as I turned my head, she snatched the bag, and scurried away.

The convicts, who are lots of fun, can be

found in the bar car at all hours. Amtrak, they tell me, isn't all that different from prison: same food; same long, pointless hours; same soulless martinets (they call them "screws"; I call them "porters") who use their limited power to make our lives miserable.

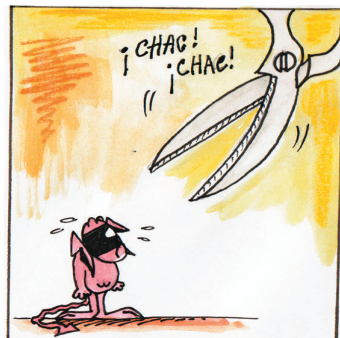
We are supposed to reach California sometime tomorrow. This evening, when I asked an engineer what time we'd arrive, he said, "Your guess is as good as mine. What's your hurry, anyway?"

Just as I was about to get on my high horse, and lecture him about what an important person I am, I caught sight of myself in the mirror behind the bar. My hair was greasy, and sticking out at odd angles; I was dressed in a ratty T-shirt, holding a beer; and behind me, my new jailbird friend, Rusty, was shuffling cards, waiting for me to return to our gin game.

No one on this train knows me, or expects anything of me. No cell phone service. No Internet. For this brief, glorious respite, I am unreachable. Where in this world can you make that claim these days?

I ease into my club chair, and pick up my cards, saying, "You're right. I'm in no hurry at all." **E.B. BOATNER**

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Amiable Aimless

On January 31, the East Bethel EconoLodge hosted the fourth-annual meeting of the Aimless Coalition. The organization had enjoyed a successful membership drive, in large measure due to embracing the formerly goal-oriented.

This was certain to create a schism in the ranks, since the arch-aimless (a faction that fought vigorously against room assignments) had long opposed including the “job and long pants” crowd.

In recent months, I had become politically active in the group, and was considered the new voice of the emerging center. Wary of aimless extremism, I supported selective use of alarm clocks, but fought against the “Gohr-Martin Cancellation Act,” which would have given members the right to blow off any appointment and ban the use of all coherent reasoning.

I arrived at the EconoLodge four hours late, well before many, but long after those who’d remained since last year’s meeting. The reservations clerk greeted me as I approached the front desk: “Good afternoon, madam. Are you here with the Aimless Coalition, or are you just curious how we bolt our TVs to the Earth’s core?”

I told the gentleman that I was indeed a member of the coalition, and asked if that entitled me to a discount. He asked if I was a member of its travel club, the first such club

to offer trip-routing for one’s mind. I was not, having been dubious of the club’s value, and having favored its abolishment (in keeping with my long-standing libertarian views on roadside assistance).

After determining that I’d have to pay the full “single occupancy, multiple deficiency” rate, he handed me the key to Room Number 2—usually reserved for visiting dignitaries—and gave me a map to my room. As always, this consisted of a semicircular arrow and the directive “around back.”

On the way out of the lobby, I read the “Schedule of Events” for the coalition meeting:

- Noon—Opening Remarks
- 1 PM—Speaker: Dr. Jonathan Hefler
Topic: “Borrowing Money From Your Inner Child”
- 2 PM—Abrasive Remarks to Passersby
- 3 PM—Motivational Speaker: Gus Gill
Topic: “Git Goin’!!!”
- 4 PM—Discussion
Topic: “When Did You Duck Out of Previous Speech?”
- 5 PM – Discussion
Topic: “When Did You Duck Out of Mainstream America?”
- 6 PM—Dinner
Topic “Thoughts on Corn”
- 7 PM—“Aces Hollywood”
- 8 PM—Official Send-off to Those Departing for the Twin Cities

9 PM—Closing Remarks and Official Welcome to Those Returning from the Twin Cities

I meandered to my room, and was immediately greeted by several fellow members, all of whom I hadn’t seen or heard from in the past year. This, of course, meant we were all doing something right.

The first order of business was the traditional hazing of new members. We’d received some bad press for what many perceived to be our barbaric rituals. But this was an act of bonding—something that would forever link us, especially during those moments of weakness when one ponders society at large, and tinkers with the idea of participation.

The hazing consisted of having new members go out to the street; lie on the double yellow line; and, whenever a car passed, seethingly mutter a comment, mired in eternal mootness, as to why they’d never buy that particular vehicle.

After a successful day of inducting new members, and retiring the pager number of a delusional day worker, we all agreed to meet again next year...around back.

Oh, yes indeed, yet another aimless weekend to be proud of. I thrive with aimless. In fact, and consider the source here, I actually managed to create a college semester composed entirely of “independent study.” Aimless is a gift.

Bye for now.

Kiss, kiss. **JULIE DAFYDD**

Just Wondering

Dear Ms. Behavior:

How does a 56-year-old single lesbian find new people and things to do after leaving a relationship of 21 years that narrowed the focus to family and work?

I am in foreclosure, on unemployment, and barely self-employed. It's not a pretty financial picture.

Most days, I feel like it's an opportunity for change. I've started connecting with old friends. I'm spending quiet time, and eliminating distraction. I'm working on a marketing business; writing; volunteering in English as a Second Language (ESL) tutoring; and helping a friend who administratively is assisting someone who builds schools in Sudan.

Truly, my life has taken a turn toward what I hope is a good track. It has been an opportunity for growth. I finally may have figured out how to listen.

Someone quoted Emerson today, so I

googled him, and read some quotes. The one that made me laugh out loud: "Solitude is impractical, and yet society is fatal."

Apparently, I need help finding people who appreciate my sense of humor.

So, Ms. Behavior, what have you for me? I look forward to your wisdom.

—JUST WONDERING

Dear Just Wondering:

It would be nice if a formula existed by which you could heal yourself, offer pithy quotes, and then be guaranteed to find a hot little woman to accompany you for the rest of your life.

As your adviser during this fallow time, Ms. Behavior wants to make sure you know that, in fact, you are walking in exactly the right direction. The little unemployment problem is difficult, but you are addressing that issue through suitable action and net-

working. You're taking care of yourself, too. You soon will find the same efforts that help you feel better also will strengthen your appeal to others.

The big problem right now is that you don't recognize where you are.

It's as if you have come home from a long hard day of manual labor, turned on the shower, and let your dirty clothes fall to the floor. The steam is filling the bathroom, and you are about to step in. You wouldn't want to miss the moment of cleansing—of feeling the warm water soak and purify your skin. Yet you are skipping ahead to the future, fearful about whether you ever will look fresh and moist again. You are anxious because you are naked, but you are so on the verge of dewiness.

So, just keep on keeping on, Missy. The drought is almost over.

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Dear Ms. Behavior:

My boyfriend, Matt, is a great guy. All my friends think he's "the one."

The problem is that that Matt is sneaking around, and hooking up with someone else. I saw explicit text messages on his phone from another guy (who seems younger, and has a lower IQ). The texts Matt sent were equally explicit and shocking.

I feel like I'm supposed to yell and scream, and break up with Matt—because we supposedly are committed. But strangely, once I get beyond the surprise, his cheating does not even bother me.

My best friend, Jessie, said maybe I don't care because I want to hook up with other people, too. The thing is, I don't.

I don't want to redefine our relationship as "open," but I lack the stomach to confront Matt, or even have a conversation about it.

When I think of Matt getting some of his

needs met by other people, I feel relieved. Maybe I won't be so disappointing if he's not counting on me for everything. Jessie says that's pathetic.

Am I pathetic? Why don't I care if my boyfriend fucks around?

—BRIAN

Dear Brian:

Even if you truly don't care about Matt's infidelity, you may want to acknowledge the truth to each other openly.

Remaining clear and honest increases the odds that your relationship will last. Of course, plenty of marriages are built on denial, and ignoring irksome details. It depends on what kind of relationship you and Matt want.

Meanwhile, here are some possible explanations for your blasé reaction:

(1) You just are not that into Matt.

(2) You are spiritually evolved and/or too cool to care.

(3) You're clinically depressed, and caring feels like too much trouble.

(4) The other man's (Mr. Texter's) low IQ makes you feel too secure to worry.

(5) You are incapable of true love and commitment. If you were able to commit, you'd have chosen someone other than Matt—someone who really could "go there" with you.

(6) You have low self-esteem, and feel that you are not worthy of devotion anyway—hence, your fear about seeming disappointing.

(7) You are French. **MERYL COHN**

© 2011 Meryl Cohn. Address questions and correspondence to <msbehavior@aol.com>. She is the author of Do What I Say: Ms. Behavior's Guide to Gay and Lesbian Etiquette (Houghton Mifflin). Signed copies are available directly from the author.

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YELLOW PAGES ADVERTISER INDEX

ADULT

Hardline Gay Chat..... 65
Megaphone 64, 65

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

Art Institutes International
Minnesota 32
Hennepin Theatre
Trust 37
Kerasotes ShowPlace
ICON Theater 14..... 31
Chelsea Handler..... 35
Lavender's OUT at
the Movies 39
Minnesota Orchestra .. 36
Minnesota Philharmonic
Orchestra..... 36
Ordway Center for
the Performing Arts..... 33

AUTOMOTIVE

Hagen's Auto Body..... 55
LaMettry's Collision..... 6

BARS & NIGHTLIFE

Out on the Town
Advertiser Guide..... 40
19 Bar 45
Brass Rail 44
Coale's 44
Gay 90's 41
Score/Tickles 45
Town House 42

BUSINESS OPPORTUNITY

Shaklee..... 55

BEAUTY & RELAXATION

Anew Aesthetic
Medical Center..... 7
Barbers On Bryant 55
East 42nd Street Salon5
Eclectic Spalon 55

COMMUNICATIONS

AM950, The
Voice of Minnesota 64
Qwest 25
Radio K 770 54

EMPLOYMENT

Pride Talent
Acquisition 10

EVENTS

Creating Change
Conference 2011..... 67
Lavender First
Thursdays..... 11
Minneapolis Home
& Garden Show..... 15
Park Tavern Bowling &
Entertainment Center... 28

FINANCIAL

Clark, Kelly H..... 55
Foster, Greg 9
Harbor Group..... 35, 55
Moltaji, Roya..... 5
Muhlehardt, Linda 58
Palm, Karen 7
ROR Tax
Professionals..... 54
Silvernale Accounting
Services 55
US Bank..... 3, 11

FOOD

Vinaigrette 49

GROCERY STORES

Wedge Co-op 49

HEALTH, WELLNESS & RECOVERY

Burns, Steve..... 58
Carrillo, Dr. Thomas P.. 58
Chase, Lisa 58
Get Real Fitness 55
Heffelfinger, Kate..... 57
HIM Program 37
Medica 35
Pride Institute 37
Rainbow Health
Initiative 27
University of
Minnesota, Infectious
Diseases..... 29

HOME FURNISHINGS & ACCESSORIES

Little Blind Spot 19
Minnesota Valley
Cabinets 19

HOME SERVICES

A-Z Electric 57

Bluestem Construction . 55
Castle Building &
Remodeling 57
The Chuba Company.. 10
Earl's Floor Sanding 55
Garlock-French
Roofing 21
Good Stuff Moving 57
Granite
Transformations 55
Lorenz Concrete 57
Matt's Tree Service..... 57
Mr. Handyman 55
Personal Pride
Construction 57
Pro Home Renovating . 57
Ryan's Tree Care 57
Sedgwick Heating
and Air..... 21
Soderlin Plumbing,
Heating & Air
Conditioning..... 55
SOS Homecare 55
The Tile Shop..... 21
Twin City Heating
and Air..... 57
Vujovich Design Build.. 19

INSURANCE

Baldwin, Davina 57
Bartell, Dawn 6
Wagner Insurance-
Financial Services..... 57
Wolfson, Steve..... 57

JEWELRY

Max's..... 9
T Lee Fine Designer
Jewelry..... 35

LEGAL

Burg, Jerry 9
Cloutier & Brandl 28
Dean, Jeff 5
Family Solutions
Law Group 19
Heltzer & Houghtaling 50
Hoffner Law Firm 11
Moshier, Becky 7

MALLS & SHOPPING CENTERS

Mall of America..... 68

MORTGAGE

Grunewald, Mark..... 6
Lozinski, David..... 5

PET PRODUCTS & SERVICES

Animal Humane
Society 6
Nokomis Pet Clinic 57

REAL ESTATE & RENTALS

Calfee, David..... 58
Downtown Resource
Group 8
Farinella, Marilyn 58
Haubrich, Scott..... 58
Leviton, Ann..... 58
McGee, Michael..... 6
Ruzick, Amy &
Johnson, Kay 5

RESTAURANTS

Burger Moe's..... 51
Christos 45
French Meadow
Bakery & Café 49
Ginger Hop/Honey 45
Jakeeno's Pizza
& Pasta..... 49
KinDee Thai
Restaurant..... 49
Loring Kitchen & Bar ... 51
Toast Wine
Bar & Café 49
Tum Rup Thai 49
Uptown Diner,
Woodbury Cafe,
Louisiana Café,
Grandview Grill 49

SPORTS & RECREATION

Hoigaard's 44

TOBACCO PRODUCTS

Camel SNUS 2

The National Conference on LGBT Equality

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23

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